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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 006565

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

REF: A. STATE 181228

[1](#)B. ANKARA 6366

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkey -- despite serious ongoing concerns about violence and what it views as overreaching Kurdish aspirations, as well as anger over the PKK issue -- has been steadily engaging the new Iraq. Increasing this engagement would require demonstrating to the GOT that Iraqi disintegration is not imminent, that the Iraqi Kurds will not be permitted to grab Kirkuk and other territory, and that Iraq and/or the U.S. is ready to take concrete measures against the PKK. Answers to ref a tasker in para. 9. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Turkey has been a fairly willing -- albeit sometimes difficult -- partner on Iraq. The GOT and even more so the Turkish people strongly opposed OIF. Events since the March 1, 2003 crisis in U.S.-Turkey relations (when the Turkish Parliament failed to approve CF use of Turkish territory for the northern option) have been more discouraging than encouraging for Turkey. On a larger scale, Turks see the insurgency (which has killed over 100 Turkish citizens, mostly truck drivers, in Iraq), ongoing sectarian violence, perceived Shia domination of the political system (Turkey is largely Sunni) and, related to this, worrisome Iranian influence as significant threats. Turkey does not want a civil war, or a Shia religious state heavily influenced by its traditional regional rival, Iran, on its borders.

[1](#)3. (C) The issues of the day, however, are for the Turks chiefly regional: First on the list is usually the PKK, but a higher concern is an ascendant Iraqi Kurdistan with designs on (many here believe) Kirkuk and other territory south of the green line, control of oil resources, and independence

[1](#)4. (C) Turkey has overcome these doubts at least enough to support the U.S. mission in Iraq. Turkey's agreement to allow the use of its territory as a logistical hub has been a combat multiplier for our Iraq operations. Normally, two-thirds of gasoline and diesel fuel shipments (3 million gallons per day) for the Iraqi people and 25% of sustainment fuel for the coalition crosses into Iraq through the Ground Line of Communication at Habur Gate. Lack of payment from the Iraqi side for humanitarian fuel has on occasion slowed

movement of this commodity. Since May 2005 when Turkey approved the use of Incirlik Air Base as a cargo hub to support coalition operations in Iraq, over 152 million pounds of equipment has been shipped to US troops. This year, 58% of all air cargo into Iraq has transited the Incirlik cargo hub.

15. (C) Turkey has engaged all iterations of various Iraqi governments since OIF began. Turkey initiated the Iraq neighbors meetings in 2003. During IIG days, Ghazi al-Yawar made his first foreign visit to Turkey, and the GOT was anguished that IIG PM Allawi never visited despite numerous invitations. IIG PM Ja'afari made his first foreign visit to Turkey (he in fact visited twice). Turkey has maintained its embassy in Baghdad throughout and is represented by an ambassador (insurgents have tried to kill him twice), and quickly received an Iraqi ambassador. The Turkish Embassy in Baghdad is constrained by minimal staffing and relatively poor communication with Ankara, and is outside the Green Zone. The GOT is opening a consulate in Mosul and has allowed the Iraqis to open a consulate in Istanbul. The GOT has trained political parties (including Kurds, Shias, and Sunni Arabs), military officers, and diplomats.

16. (C) Turkey has also been responsive to our requests to engage the Sunni Arabs and persuade them to participate in the political process. Both in Iraq and through Iraqis visiting Turkey, Turkish officials worked their Sunni Arab contacts to get them to take part in Iraq's many elections last year. This effort was largely successful.

17. (C) Turkey has been more reluctant to engage Iraqi

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Kurdistan. In general, the GOT has no problem meeting Iraqi Kurds serving in the GOI: FonMin Zibari and Deputy PM Barham Salih are frequent visitors here (Turkish officials generally praise Salih in particular as a capable, trustworthy interlocutor). However, beyond intel channels Turkish officials have little contact with KDP, PUK, and KRG officials, chiefly due to Turkish anger over the PKK, Kirkuk, and independence issues, including language they find particularly offensive in the preamble to the KRG draft constitution. Turkish companies are, however, active in Iraqi Kurdistan, which is also potentially important to Turkey as a source of natural gas.

18. (C) We have also been unsuccessful thus far in persuading senior Turkish leaders to visit Iraq. Senior MFA officials have told us that they have implored FonMin Gul to visit Baghdad and hopefully pave the road for PM Erdogan to follow, but Gul -- likely mindful of negative Turkish public opinion on the PKK issue in particular -- seems to have been resistant. We will raise the issue again in the wake of PM Maliki's Nov. 16-17 visit.

19. (S) Answers to ref a questions follow:

Q: What would be required for the host government to be more actively engaged in Iraq? What will the host government require of Iraq before it is willing to increase support?

A: Turkey would need to be assured that Iraq is not about to disintegrate. Violence in Baghdad and Mosul severely constrain Turkey's diplomatic efforts in Iraq. Turkey would also need to see concrete signs that the GOI and USG are willing to take steps to ensure that Kirkuk and other significant portions of territory south of the green line do not fall under complete Kurdish control. Finally, Turkey would also need to see real action of some kind to deal with the PKK's presence in northern Iraq.

Q: What strategy should the U.S. Government take in engaging the host government in order to encourage greater support for Iraq?

A: We need to continue to engage Turkey -- a NATO Ally, the only democracy and the only developed economy on Iraq's borders -- at a senior and serious level on our strategy in Iraq and the tactics we are using to achieve our objectives. Turkish leaders and officials are nervous about talk and rumors emanating from Washington about troop withdrawals. Turks believe that if we withdraw now, Iraq will fall into chaos with the end result an independent Kurdistan on its borders, an Iranian puppet state in the south, and a Sunni terrorist haven in the middle.

Turkey is miffed that it was excluded from the Preparatory Group for the International Compact with Iraq. Officials likely take this as further evidence that we and/or the Iraqis do not consider Turkey a serious partner in Iraq policy. Turning this decision around -- even if belated -- would reassure Turkey that we and the Iraqis value their input and see them as a serious partner in Iraq's reconstruction.

Q: What specific contributions -- financial, political, security or other -- could the host government make to Iraq, assuming it was approached in the correct manner and at an appropriate level?

A: Turkey has pledged \$50 million in reconstruction funds but has spent only about 20% of this, citing security concerns. Turkey's plans to build a hospital in Baghdad and donate non-lethal military equipment to the ISF appear stalled. The GOT and GOI have also discussed having Turks provide police or military training in Iraq as opposed to in Turkey; this would presumably be more efficient and cheaper. Additionally, Turkey has been unwilling to forgive the approximately \$ 1.6 billion it holds in Iraqi debt, but may be willing to consider other options (ref b), especially if Turkey has a greater sense of inclusion in other fora. A

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senior-level push from us might help loosen these items up.

Turkey's private sector could play a major role in ensuring Iraq's economic success. In addition to investment and trade, Turkey's construction industry could help rebuild the country. Turkish-Iraqi trade volume was \$ 3.2 billion in 2005. Of this, \$2.7 billion was exports from Turkey to Iraq, a nearly four-fold increase over 2003 levels. Turkish companies and the GOT are keenly interested in developing hydrocarbon reserves, especially natural gas, in the north for export to Turkey and Europe. Turkey has proposed and we are working to support Turkey-Iraq-US working group on gas. It is probably too early to include KRG representatives, but that may be possible once Iraq has approved a new hydrocarbons law.

Turkey says it is willing to talk to Iraq at any time on trans-boundary water issues and we have encouraged increasing dialogue. They held a bilateral in May and another is scheduled for December.

Q: What are the host government's opinions on the relationship between Iraq and Syria? How will the host government perceive any change, either for the better or for the worse, in the relationship between Iraq and Syria? How could the host government be used to influence Syrian behavior toward Iraq?

A: Turkey and Syria share a common concern about Iraqi Kurdish aspirations, and both want to benefit from Iraqi oil. And while some insurgents en route to Iraq via Syria have crossed into Syria from Turkey, there are no indications that Turkey offers any knowing safe-haven to terrorists and foreign fighters.

The Turkey-Syria relationship is growing, but it is a marriage of convenience, not affection. We have used Turkey in the past -- cautiously -- to engage the Syrians on Middle

East issues. It is difficult to measure how effective this has been. Provided our message is not contrary to Turkey's interests, the GOT would likely be willing to engage Syria on Iraq-related issues.

Q: What are the host government's opinions on the relationship between Iraq and Iran? How will the host government perceive any change, either for the better or for the worse, in the relationship between Iraq and Iran? How could the host government be used to influence Iranian behavior toward Iraq?

A: Turkey is an unlikely conduit to influence the Iranians on Iraq. We do not see a scenario in which Turkish engagement or pressure would restrain Tehran.

Iran is Turkey's regional rival, but the nuclear issue has taught us again that the GOT is cautious in confronting Tehran. As with Syria, Turkey shares a concern with Iran regarding the Iraqi Kurds, and the Iranians have sought to curry Turkish favor by taking (limited) action against the PKK, including lobbing shells on purported PKK hideouts in Iraqi territory. Turkey is also unhappy with Shia influence over the Iraqi Kurds, especially Tehran's historical links with the PUK.

In general, Turkey is leery of its rival increasing its influence in Iraq. Even the moderate Islamist ruling AK Party does not want an expansionist Islamist state increasing its influence in the region, especially a Shia Islamist state. If Turkey has any natural allies in Iraq (and it has very few), they are primarily the Sunni Arabs. Turkey would likely see increased Iranian influence as coming at the expense of this community.

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